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# THE AMERICAN NATURALIST.

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## A PILGRIMAGE TO TEOTIHUACAN.

BY R. E. HILLS.

THE pyramids of Teotihuacan are situated in a beautiful valley adjoining that of Mexico on the Northeast, and possessing greater beauty and fertility than its more famous neighbor. To reach these ruins, we left the city by the six o'clock morning train, for the station of San Juan Teotihuacan. Our party consisted of four Americans, one a resident of Mexico. As the sun had not risen, we found the air chilly and penetrating, and overcoats very comfortable. Our leader prudently carried an umbrella, not to keep off the rain, for it never rains here in March, but to protect himself from the fierce rays of the sun, which in the clear atmosphere of this altitude are very effective at midday.

About eight o'clock we alight from the train to be besieged by numerous small boys, who offer for sale various relics from the ruins. After engaging the services of four Indian boys as guides, we set off afoot to visit the ruins.

Accounts differ as to the origin of these works. We are informed by Ixtlilxochitl that they were built by the Toltecs after their migration from Hue Hue Hapalan.

Mr. Bancroft places this event in the fifth or sixth century, Professor Short thinks that the evidence in favor of the fourth century is fully as good. On the other hand, Mons. Charnay's recent excavations have led him to believe that the works at Tula were built about A. D. 660, and as the Teotihuacan works are of very much the same character, and at no great distance from Tula, the presumption is that their age is about the same.

In selecting their site, the builders certainly exercised better

judgment than did the later race, who built the wonderful city on the shore of Lake Tezcuco—a lake whose only outlet is the atmosphere. In fact, the government has finally been compelled to attempt the artificial drainage of this lake; a contract for the construction of a canal for this purpose having been already made.

The principal works at Teotihuacan consist of two truncated pyramids—the “Mound of the Sun” and the “Mound of the Moon.” The first measures 761 by 722 feet at the base, 216 feet in height, and its platform measures 59 by 105 feet, according to the figures of Señor Garcia y Cubas.

From a distance a zigzag pathway leading up its eastern side is plainly discernible, but from either its foot or its summit the pathway is not noticed. In the centre of the platform stands a pillar of stone and cement, five feet in diameter, and four and a half feet high. Two explanations of this pillar may be offered. In case the pyramid was a religious structure, the pillar may have been used as an altar, or a pedestal for some sculptured image. If the pyramid was an astronomical structure, a possibility by no means remote when we remember the knowledge of astronomy possessed by this race, the pillar was doubtless a part of the apparatus employed in observing the movements of the heavenly bodies.

From this summit we look to the north and see a series of beautifully rounded hills which look as if they might have been made by the hand of man, so regular are their outlines. To the west is the hill which hides from our view the lovely valley of Mexico.

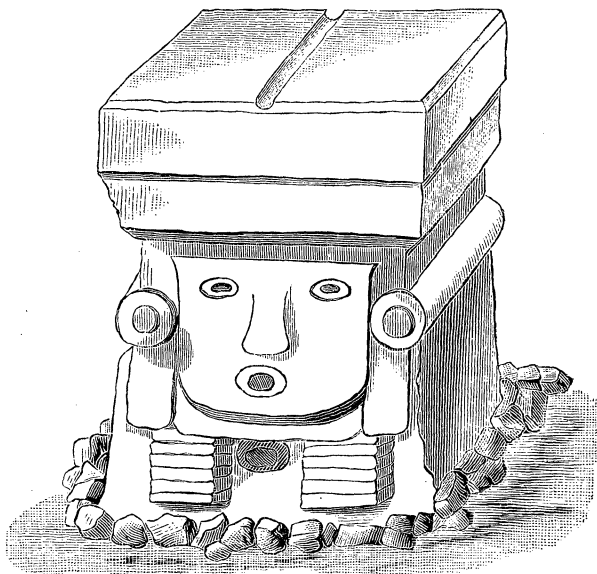
In the distance, toward the south, are the white peaks of Popocatepetl, Ixtacihuatl and Malinche, while at our feet we may see the villages of San Juan, San Sebastian, San Martin and Santa Maria, so near that we can catch the sound of their bells as they ring out from the white tower of the Spanish-built churches.

The “Mound of the Moon,” according to our former authority, measures 512 by 426 feet at the base, 137 feet in height, and has a platform  $19\frac{1}{2}$  feet square. In addition there is a step or platform about half way from base to summit. From near this mound extends an avenue between two rows of singular ruins to the Rio San Juan, a distance of more than a mile. This is called the “Path of the Dead,” and passes by the “Mound of the Sun” on the west. These ruins have the appearance of immense houses which have been totally destroyed, leaving only great masses of

material with no recognizable structure, and now largely overgrown with vegetation.

The pyramids themselves are very regular in shape, but are covered with loose fragments of volcanic rock varying in size from six to eighteen inches. Amongst these rocks have grown up numerous shrubs, flowers and cactuses. These give a very ragged appearance to the structures.

Near the "Path of the Dead" is the mouth of a cave of unknown depth, which has ramifications to the right and left. There



Monolith near the Pyramids of Teotihuacan.

is a tradition that a subterranean passage exists between the pyramids. If this is true the cave is probably connected with this passage. As our party had not prepared to explore any caves our investigations ceased when we had exhausted the stock of wax matches we happened to have in our pockets. At the mouth of this cave stands the huge monolith described by Almaraz (*Apuntes*, pp. 354-5), which he says "was found among the débris of a *tlaltel*" or mound. It is about five and a half feet wide and thick, and according to the above author, ten and a half feet high, and weighs over fifteen tons. At present, however, it stands only six feet above ground, and is surrounded by the small volcanic rocks which cover the surface in all directions. An at-

tempt was once made to remove the monolith to the city of Mexico, but it was found too heavy and was abandoned. The natives relate that soon after the conquest, the Spaniards attempted to cut the stone in two, but after each day's work with chisels, the stone was miraculously restored in the night to a perfect condition, and they finally desisted. The accompanying cut shows the face of the stone as it now appears.

Near the "Mound of the Sun" may be seen the ruins of the "Palace." Its present magnificence consists in a solid floor of cement, some smoothly plastered walls about three feet in height built at an angle of perhaps fifteen degrees from the vertical, and a stairway of six or seven stone steps leading down into the débris.

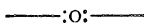
In the ploughed fields in this vicinity we found large numbers of obsidian implements and terra-cotta figures. The arrow-heads are exactly similar in shape and size to those made of flint, by the North American Indians, and of common occurrence.

The knife-blades are from one and one-half to one and three-fourths inches long, from three-eighths to five-eighths of an inch wide and only one-eighth of an inch thick in the center.

One figure apparently represents a horned animal, and is the only one of the kind which has come under the writer's observation. It measures one and three-fourths inches in length and the same in height, from tip to tip. In the group of terra-cotta figures, two have a decidedly Egyptian appearance, while one is as certainly African, and another shows a strong suspicion of the Turk. Many of the figures of heads seem to be wanting the left ear; whether it was purposely omitted or has been easily knocked off in consequence of having been molded separately and afterward attached to the head, it is difficult to determine. Two images represent the heads of animals, while another is a perforated disc, one and three-sixteenths inches in diameter, and half an inch thick, with a depression on one side eleven-sixteenths of an inch in diameter. There is a great variety of countenance exhibited on these figures. The material also seems to vary, to a certain extent, some of the clay being of a finer grain than the rest, and, therefore, susceptible of a smoother finish.

In regard to the ruins in general, Bancroft says, "Humboldt speaks of hundreds of these mounds" (such as compose the 'Path of the Dead') "arranged in streets, running exactly east

and west, and north and south from the pyramids." "According to Latrobe, the mounds extend for miles towards Tezcuco; and Waddy Thompson is confident that they are the ruins of an ancient city nearly as large as Mexico"



## THE GRAY RABBIT (LEPUS SYLVATICUS).

BY SAMUEL LOCKWOOD.

*(Continued from November number.)*

THE thrifty house-dame, who has a way of "culling simples" for her cuisine and leech-craft, feels badly hurt when the spring discloses the fact that of her savory pot-herbs the finest tussock has been used by a rabbit as a form through the winter, and the whole middle of it has been killed by the heat of the occupant's body. In a friend's garden a large mat of thyme was thus nearly ruined. Who has not heard of improvident humans eating themselves out of house and home? What self-possession and decorous restraint in this our little solitaire. However pinching the winter's cold and scarce the food, Coney keeps a wise care for his covert from the storm.

In some things certainly the gray rabbit is quite particular, and sometimes too much so for its own good. So inquisitorious is it of small things on the way, that when in full retreat before the dog, the whistle of the hunter to stop the hound, will sometimes stop the rabbit also. Even the clicking when setting the hammer of the gun will check the poor dazed thing in its flight, for it must know what the unusual sound is. True the pause is only for an instant, but that is enough for the sportsman's aim. In the woods the rabbit will course through the underbrush, then, after making a tremendous leap at right angles, will double his track. These movements it will vary with zig-zags, greatly bothering the hounds; not seeming to look for a hole unless it be closely pressed, and a hollow tree offers an illusive asylum. In cleared land it makes for a known hiding place. And generally it knows all the good spots in a wide territory. My friend, Mr. Geo. H. Vanderbeck, an intelligent farmer, gives me the follow-